

"... perhaps best known for its namesake grass, prairie dropseed, which grows in profusion in the rich, calcareous black soil."

Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

Natural Areas of Cook County

Dropseed Prairie Nature Preserve





Our region is famous for the finest tallgrass prairies in the world; their deep, black soil and robust grasses team with life. Dropseed Prairie Nature Preserve well embodies this most quintessential of Illinois habitats. While Dropseed Prairie is small, it is of a very high quality, harboring tremendous diversity at small scales. At least 90 native plant species are packed into 14 acres. Study plots the size of a hula hoop can average 20 plant species, making this, inch-for-inch, among the most diverse habitats known. Upland to wet prairie communities separate themselves along soil, moisture, and elevation gradients. Elevation is a relevant and relative term as the sites two-foot elevation change is virtually undetectable. However, these subtleties separate characteristic upland prairie plants such as, big bluestem, prairie dropseed, prairie phlox, mountain mint, shooting star, hoary puccoon, rattlesnake master, prairie Indian plantain,





compass plant, and prairie dock, from the lower, less well-drained clay soils, where marsh blazing star, smooth marsh phlox, and prairie cord grass grow. In moist depressions, calcium concentrates in the soil. Calcium-loving species like Ohio goldenrod, Riddel's goldenrod, stiff gentian, and common valerian, indicate where localized patches of this unique hydrology are found. Other uncommon flowers like prairie sundrops (mid-summer), and Indian paint brush (mid-May), are not to be missed. This native plant abundance supports more than 20 butterfly species. If you are lucky you may catch a glimpse of the smooth green snake, fox snake, eastern plains garter snake, or DeKay's snake as well. A loose network of narrow dirt paths circles this remarkable little prairie. You may find yourself so hypnotized by its natural displays that you'll forget that you are a stone's throw from I-57.

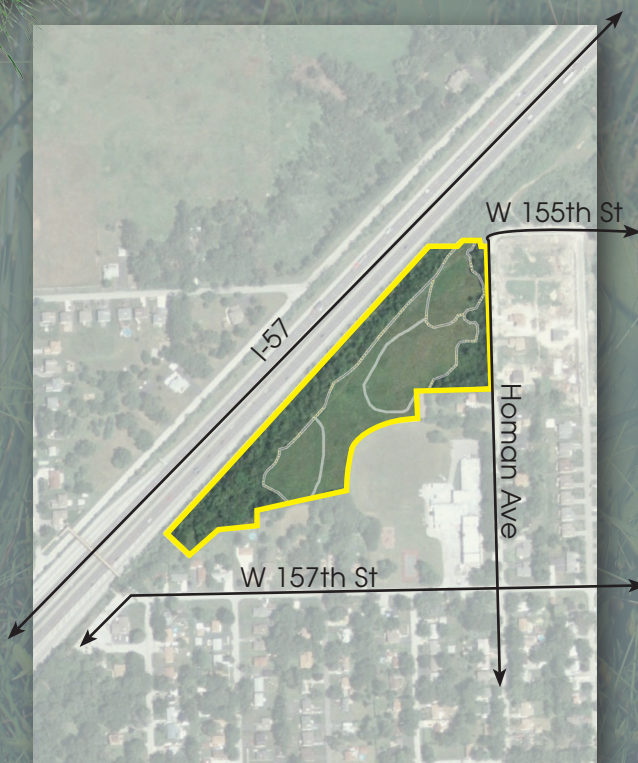


Directions

Take 159th Street to Kedzie Ave. Then take Kedzie north to 157th St.
Go west to Homan St., then north one block to the prairie.

Photo by INHS staff except two-spotted skipper and Indian
paintbrush courtesy of Dr. Ron Panzer.

GPS: N 41.6058, -W 87.7010



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